

Potiphar's Wife

STORY OF

JOSEPH

REVISED

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POTIPHAR'S WIFE.

Story of Joseph Revised.

For more than six-and-thirty centuries the brand of the courtesan has rested on the brow of Potiphar's wife. The religious world persists in regarding her as an abandoned woman who wickedly strove to lead an immaculate he-virgin astray. The crime of which she stands accused is so unspeakably awful that even after the lapse of ages we can not refer to the miserable creature without a moan. Compared with her infamous conduct old Lot's dalliance with his young daughters and David's ravishment of Uriah's wife appear but venial faults, or even shine as spotless virtues.

The story of Mrs. Potiphar's unrequited passion may be strictly true; but if so the world has changed most wondrously. It transcends the probable and rests upon such doubtful *ex parte* evidence that a modern court would give her a certificate of good character. It is not in accord with our criminal code to damn a woman on the unsupported deposition of a young dude whom she has had arrested for attempted ravishment. Had Joseph simply filed a general denial and proven previous good character we might suspect the madame of malicious prosecution; but he doth protest too much.

Mrs. Potiphar was doubtless a young and pretty woman. She was the wife of a wealthy and prominent official of Pharaoh's court, and those old fellows were a trifle exacting in their tastes. They sought out the handsomest women of the world to grace their homes, for sensuous love was then the supreme law of wedded life. Joseph was a young Hebrew slave belonging to Mrs. Potiphar's husband, who treated him with exceptional consideration because of his business ability. One day the lad found himself alone with the lady. The latter suddenly turned in a fire alarm and Jacob's favorite son jogged along Josie in such hot haste that he left his garment behind. Mrs. Potiphar informed those who responded to her signal of distress that the slave had attempted a criminal assault. She is supposed to have repeated the

story to her husband when he came home, and the chronicler adds, in a tone of pained surprise, that the old captain's "anger was kindled." Neither Mrs. Potiphar's husband nor her dearest female friends appear to have doubted her version of the affair, which argues that, for a woman who moved in the highest social circles, she enjoyed a reasonably good reputation.

But Joseph had a different tale to tell. He said that the poor lady became desperately enamored of his beauty and day by day assailed his continence, but that he was deaf to her amorous entreaties as Adonis to the dear blandishments of Venus Pandemos. Finally she became so importunate that he was compelled to seek safety in flight. He saved his virtue but lost his vestments. It was a narrow escape, and the poor fellow must have been dreadfully frightened. Suppose that the she-Tarquin had accomplished her hellish design, and that the victim had died of shame? She would have changed the whole current of the world's history! Old Jacob and his other interesting if less virtuous sons would have starved to death and there would have been neither Miracles nor Mosaic Law, Ten Commandments nor Vicarious Atonement. Talmage and other industrious exploiters of intellectual tommyrot, now ladling out Saving Grace for fat salaries, might be as unctiously mouthing for Mumbo Jumbo, fanning the flies off some sacred bull or bowing the knee to Baal. The Potiphar-Joseph episode deserves the profoundest study. It was an awful crisis in the history of the human race!

How thankful we who live in these latter days should be that the female rape fiend has passed into the unreturning erstwhile with the horned unicorn and dreadful hippogriff, the minotaur and other monsters that once affrighted the fearful souls of men,—that sensuous sirens do not so assail us and rip our coat-tails off in a foul attempt to wreck our virtue and fill our lives with fierce regret. True, the Rev. Parkhurst doth protest that he was hard beset by beer and beauty unadorned; but he seems to have been seeking the loaded "schooner" and listening for the siren's dizzy song. Had Joseph lived in Texas he could never have persuaded Judge Lynch that the lady and not he should be hanged. The youngster dreamed himself into slavery, and I opine that he dreamed himself into jail. With the internal evidence of the story for guide, I herewith present, on behalf of Mrs. Potiphar, a revised and reasonable version of the *affaire d'amour*.

Joseph was, the chronicler informs us, young, "a goodly person and well favoured." His Hebraic type of manly beauty and mercurial temperament must have contrasted strangely with Mrs. Potiphar's dark and stolid countrymen. Mistress and slave were much together, the master's duties requiring his presence near his prince. Time hung heavy on the lady's hands and, as an *ennui* antidote, she embarked in a desperate flirtation with the handsome fellow, for Egypt's dark-eyed daughters dearly love to play fast and loose with the hearts of men. Of course it was very wrong; but youth and beauty will not be strictly bound, the opportunity seemed made for mischief, and Mrs. Potiphar cared little for her lord,—a grisly old warrior who treated her as a pretty toy his wealth had purchased, to be petted or put aside at pleasure.

A neglected wife whose charms attract the admiring eyes of men may not depart one step from the straight and narrow path, but her husband's honor stands ever within the pale of danger. Let that husband whose courtship ceased at Hymen's shrine, who is a gallant abroad and a boor at a home, keep watch and ward, for homage is sweet even to wedded women.

While Potiphar played the petty tyrant and exacted of his wife a blind obedience, Joseph sang to her the songs she loved,—plaintive tales of the tender passion, of enchanted monarchs and maids of matchless beauty. He culled the fairest flowers from the great garden and wove them into garlands to deck her hair, dark as that lingering night which Moses laid upon the Valley of the Nile. He gave her the thousand little attentions so grateful to womankind, and worshipped her, not presumptuously, but with the sacred awe of a simple desert child turning his face to greet the rising sun. They were of the same age,—that age when the heart beats in passionate rebellion against cold precepts, the blood riots in the veins like molten rubies and all life seems made for love, for day dreams golden as the dawn, for sighs and sweet companionship. What wonder that she sometimes left her lord to his heavy slumbers and crept into the cool gardens with the handsome Hebrew boy; that they walked, hand clasped in hand beneath the tall palms that nodded knowingly, and whispered sweet nothings while the mellow moonlight quivered on the Nile and sad Philomela poured forth her plaintive song like a flood of lover's tears? All day long they were alone together,—those children of the world's youth, when life was strong and moral law was weak. When the summer sun rode high in heaven and sent his burnished shafts

straight down into the white streets and swooning gardens; when the great house was closed to shut out the blinding glare and in the court cool fountains cast their grateful spray, what wonder that she bade him sit at her feet and sing the love songs of his native land, wild prototypes of those which Solomon poured from the depths of his sensuous soul to his sweet Rose of Sharon?

“Behold thou art fair my love, behold thou art fair;
Thou hast dove’s eyes, thy lips are like a thread of scarlet,
Thy breasts like young roes that feed among the lilies.
Set me as a seal upon thy heart, a seal upon thy arm,
For love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave.”

The song dies out and the languorous stillness is broken only by the plashing of the fountains in their great marble basins and the drowsy hum of a honey-bee among the blossoms. The lad’s head has sunk down upon the lady’s knee and she is watching the tears trembling on his drooping lashes and wondering, with a little thrill of pain, if he has a sweetheart in his own land of whom he is so sadly dreaming. She thanks him for the song in a voice low and sweet as the musical ripple of the sacred river among the reeds,—she dazzles him with her great Egyptian eyes, those ebon orbs in which ever lurks the sensuous splendor of a summer night’s high noon. Her hand strays caressingly among his curls as she punctuates with sighs and tears his oft told tale of unkind brethren, the gloomy cave, the coat of many colors dipped in blood of the slaughtered kid, the cruel goad of godless Midianite, driving him on and on thro’ burning sands and ’neath a blazing sun, far from his tearful mother and mourning sire. How cruel the fates to consign to slavery one born to be a king! His master is a hard man and covetous, but her pleadings shall yet purchase sweet liberty for old Jacob’s son, that he may fulfill the high dreams of which he has told her,—may answer the midnight messages of Israel’s God and triumph over those wicked brethren. Perhaps—who knows?—in his own land he will become a mighty prince and treat with proud Pharaoh on equal terms. Will he then forget her, his only friend in a land of foes? Will he think of her when Ammon is o’erthrown and proud Moab pays him tribute? Ah no! When a crown of jewels blazes on his brow and the sack-cloth of the slave is exchanged for imperial purple, he’ll think no more of the lonely little woman by Nilus’ bank, who prays that Isis will magnify his power, that Osiris will shield him when the Hebrew sword rings on the Hivite spear. He will take to wife some fair cousin, of Esau’s house, a maid more beauteous far than

those who drink the sweet waters of the south. Old Abram's daughters are fair and have dove's eyes; their lips are as threads of scarlet and their breasts like young roes that feed among the lilies. Does not the song say so? But those of Egypt—oh unhappy Egypt!

"Love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave."

She bends low and whispers the line upon his lips, while her fragrant breath, beating upon his cheek, sinks into his blood like the jasmine's perfume,—more dangerous to the soul than Aphrodite's kisses on Anacreon's drunken song. By such arts did Cleopatra win the master spirit of the world and make the mailed warrior her doting slave, indifferent alike to honor and to duty, content but to live and love. What wonder that the callow shepherd lad, unskilled in woman's wiles, believed that his mistress loved him?—that his heart went out to the handsome coquette in a wild, passionate throb in which all Heaven's angels sang and all Hell's demons shrieked!

A beautiful woman! Not the beauty of Greece, on which we gaze as upon some wondrous flower wafted from Elysian Fields, and too ethereal for this gross world; nor that of Rome, with Pallas' snow-cold bosom and retrospective eye; but the sensuous beauty of the far south, that casts a Circean spell upon the souls of men. Her eyes are not dove's eyes that softly shine along the path to Heaven, but wandering fires that light the way to Hell. Her lips are not a thread of scarlet, chaste as childhood and dewey as the dawn, but the deep sullen red of a city swept with flame. Her breasts are not like young roes that feed among the lilies, but ivory hemispheres threaded with purple fire and tinged with the sunset's tawny gold. Reverently, as tho' touching Divinity's robe, Joseph caresses the wanton curls that stream like an inky storm-cloud over the shapely shoulders,—he puts the little hands, heavy with costly gems, back from the tearful face and holds them with a grasp so fierce that the massy rings of beaten gold bruise the tender flesh. Mrs. Potiphar starts up, alarmed by his unwonted boldness,—she reads his face with a swift glance that tells her he is no longer a lad, a pretty boy to be trifled with for the amusement of an idle hour. The Cupid's bow has faded forever from his lip and childhood's innocence from his eye; he has crossed Life's Rubicon, has passed at one stride from the Vale of Youth with its trifles and its idle tears; its ignorance of sex and stainless love, to Manhood's rugged mountains, where blazes

Ambition's baleful star and the fires of passion ever beat, fiercer than those that sweep Gehenna's sulphurous hills.

Even while her cheek crimson with anger and her heart flutters with fear, the woman glories in Joseph's guilty love, sweet incense to her vanity, evidence of her peerless beauty's infernal power. She retreats a step as from the brink of an abyss, but farther she cannot fly, for there is a charm in her companion's voice potent as old Merlin's mystic chant,—tones low and sweet as music heard in dreams by maids who sleep in Dian's bosom, yet wilder, fiercer than trumpets blown for war. As a sailor drawn to his doom by siren song, or a bird spell-bound by some noxious serpent, she advances fearfully and slow until she is swept into his strong arms and held quivering there like a splotch of foam in a swift eddy of the Upper Nile. The room swims before her eyes and fills with mocking demons that welcome her to the realm of darkness; the fountain's ripple sounds like roaring thunder, in which she reads the angry warning of Egypt's gods, while beneath the accursed magic of the kisses that burn upon her lips, her blood becomes boiling wine and rushes hissing thro' a heart of ice. The mocking demons turn to angels with Joseph's handsome face and crown her with fragrant flowers; the threat'ning thunders to music sweet as Memnon's matin hymn, or accepted lover's sighs heard 'neath the harvest moon,—she is afloat upon a sapphire sea beneath a sunset sky, the West Wind's musky wing wafting her, whither she neither knows nor cares.

But the angels and the fragrant flowers, the music sweet as lover's sighs and the sapphire sea, the sunset sky and Zephyrus' musky wing are dreams; the blistered lips and the poor bruised bosom, the womanly pride humbled in the dust and wifely honor wounded unto death—these alone are real! With an involuntary cry of rage and shame, a cry that is half a prayer and half a curse—a cry that rings and reverberates thro' the great sleepy house like a maniac's shriek heard at midnight among the tombs—she flings herself sobbing and moaning upon the marble floor. The drowsy slave starts up as from a dream, quivering in every limb like a coward looking upon his death. He tries to raise the groveling victim of his unbridled lust, but she beats him back; he pleads for mercy, but she calls him ungrateful slave and base Hebrew dog and prays all Egypt's gods to curse her conqueror. There's a rush of feet along the hall, there's a clash of weapons in the court, and here and there and everywhere tearful maids are calling to their mistress, the Sweet One and Beautiful, dear Daughter of the Dawn, Lily of the

Nile, while brawny eunuchs, bare-limbed and black as Hell's own brood, are vowing dire vengeance even upon the King himself if he has dared to harm her. The culprit glances with haggard face and wildly pleading eyes at the woman, once so imperial in her pride, now cowering a thing accursed, clothed only with her shame and flood of ebon hair. The great sun, that hung in mid-heaven like a disc of burnished brass when she first forgot her duty, descends like a monstrous wheel of blood upon the western desert and thro' the casement pours a ruddy glow over the prostrate figure,—a marble Venus blushing rosy red. Joseph casts his coarse garment over his companion as one might clothe the beautiful dead, and turns away, the picture of Despair, the avatar of guilty Fear.

* * *

Love is a dangerous game to play at, and oft begun in wanton mischief ends in woful madness. In the first flush of shame and rage Mrs. Potiphar was eager to punish the slave's presumption, even tho' herself o'erwhelmed in his ruin; but hate, tho' fierce is a fickle flame in the female heart and seldom survives a single flood of tears. Already Joseph's handsome face is haunting her,—already she is dreaming o'er the happy hours by Nilus' bank, where first he praised her wonderous beauty,—beneath the nodding palms when the fireflies blazed and the bulbul poured its song. The love that has lain latent within her bosom, or burned with friendship's unconsuming flame, awakes like smouldering embers fanned by desert winds and fed with camphor wood, enveloping all her world. She longs to leave the loveless life with her sullen lord; to cast from her as things accursed the gaudy robes and glittering gems; to fly with the sheperd lad to the deep cool forests of the far east and dream her life away in some black tent or vine-embowered cot,—to take his hand in hers and wander on to the world's extreme verge, listening to the music of his voice. The great house, once her pride, has become a gruesome prison, the gaoler a grisly gorgon who conjured her with the baleful gleam of gold to cast her beauty on Mammon's brutish shrine. She hardens her heart against him and pities herself, as wives are wont to do who have dragged the dear honor of their husbands in the dust,—she persuades herself that love has cast a radiant glory about her guilt and sanctified her shame. Oh woman, what a paradox thou art! When the descending sun touched the horizon's rim Mrs. Potiphar could have plunged a poisoned dagger

through the heart of her paramour and mocked his dying moan; the great globe of fire has not bid the world good night, yet she is weeping because of the bitter words with which she drove him forth.

“Love is strong as death.”

She repeats the line again and again. Oh my Israel, is the grave the limit of thy love? Wert thou dead, fair boy, Egypt would enclose thy sacred ashes in a golden urn and wear it ever between her breasts,—would make for thee a living sepulchre and thou shouldst sleep in the vale of Love, between the rosy mountains of Desire. Wert thou dead—

The slaves! They will tell their master the wild words she spoke against her love—against his life. She must seal their lips, must command their silence. Too late! Even as she lays her hand on the silver bell the heavy tread of her husband's brass-shod feet is heard in the long hall, ringing upon the bare stone floor in rapid, nervous rhythm, so different from the usual majestic march of Pharaoh's chief slaughterman. The slaves have already spoken! A faintness as of death falls upon her, but she is a true daughter of false Egypt, and a wiser than Potiphar would find in her face no shadow of the fear that lies heavy on her heart. The game is called and she must play, not for name and fame, but for love and life. Her husband confronts her, ferocity incarnate,—the great cord-like veins of the broad, low brow and massive neck knotted and black, his eyes blazing like the orbs of an angry lion seen by the flickering light of a shepherd's fire. He essays to speak, but his tongue is thick, his lips parched as of one stricken with the plague, and instead of words there comes through his set teeth a hoarse hissing sound as of the great rock serpent in its wrath. His glance falls upon Joseph's garment, the gleaming sword leaps from its sheath and he turns to seek the slave. She lays her hand lightly upon the brawny arm, great Egypt's shield, a pillar of living brass; she nestles in the grisly beard like some bright flower in a weird forest; she kisses the bronzed cheek as Judas did that of our dear Lord, and soothes him with pretty half truths that are wholly lies.

Joseph is a good boy, but sometimes over bold. Poor child! Perhaps her beauty charmed away his senses and made him forget his duty. She bade him sing to beguile a tedious hour, and he sang of love and looked at her with such a world of worship in his eyes that she grew angry and upbraided him. Let it pass, for, by the mystic mark of Apis, she frightened the boy out of his foolish fever!

She laughs gleefully and the gruff old soldier suffers her

to take his sword, growling meanwhile that he likes not these alarms,—that she has marshaled Egypt's powers to battle with a mirage. The game is won; but guilt will never rest content, and oft reveals itself by much concealment. It is passing strange, she tells him tearfully, that every male who looks upon her, whether gray-headed grand-sire or beardless boy, seems smitten with love's madness. She knows not why 'tis so. If there is in her conduct aught to challenge controversy she prays that he will tell her. The old captain's brow again grows black. He leads her where the fading light falls full upon her face, and, looking down into her eyes as tho' searching out the secrets of her soul, bids her mark well his words. The wife who bears herself becomingly never hears the tempter's tone or knows aught of any love but that of her rightful lord. Pure womanhood is a wondrous shield, more potent far than swords. If she has been approached by lawless libertine he bids her, for the honor of his house, to set a seal upon her lips instead of bruiting her shame about as women are wont to do whose vanity outruns their judgement.

Potiphar determines to watch his wife. It had never occurred to him that she could possibly go astray; but he has learned from her own confession that she is a flirt, and he knows full well that a married coquette is half a courtesan. Suspecting that Joseph's offense is graver than his wife set forth, he casts him into prison. The inexperienced youth, believing that the full extent of his guilt has been blazoned to the world, and frightened beyond his wits by armed men and the clank of chains, protests with tears and sighs that he is more sinned against than sinning. It is the old story of Adam improved upon—he not only damns the woman but denies the apple.

Joseph's posterity, hating Egypt with their whole heart and intent on glorifying Israel and Israel's God, became the only historians of this original scandal in high life; thus was a youth, probably neither better nor worse than his brethren, raised to the dignity of a demi-god, while a vain young wife is condemned thro' all the ages to wear a wanton's name. The story probably contains a moral—which wives may look for if they will.

* *

Of course this account of Mrs. Potiphar's seduction is a fancy sketch; but it is a true pen-picture of what too often happens in this fair land of ours, and may be perused with profit

by many a Benedict. The number of unfaithful wives whose sin becomes their public shame is simply appalling; yet no criminal was ever so cautious, so adept in the art of concealment as the woman who values her reputation above her honor. There is no secret a man will guard with such vigilance as his *amours*, no co-partner in iniquity he will shield with such fidelity as a paramour. The bandit may turn state's evidence and the assassin confess beneath the noose, but the *roue* will die protesting that his mistress is pure as the driven snow.

And yet woman is by nature as true to her rightful lord as the needle to the magnetic north,—as faithful to her marriage vows as the stars to their appointed courses. When a wife "goes astray" the chances are as one to infinity that the misstep is her husband's fault. Love is the very life of woman. She can no more exist without it than the vine can climb heavenward without support,—than it can blossom and bear fruit without the warm kiss of the summer sun. Woman's love is a flame that must find an altar upon which to blaze, a god to glorify; but that sacred fire will not forever burn 'mid fields of snow nor send up incense sweet to an unresponsive idol even tho' it bear the name of husband. The man who courts his wife as assiduously as he did his sweetheart, makes the same sacrifices to serve her, shows the same appreciation of her efforts to please him, need never fear a rival. He is lord paramount of her heart, and, forsaking all others, she will cleave unto him thro' good and thro' ill, thro' weal and thro' woe, thro' life unto death. But the man who imagines his duty done when he provides food, shelter and fine raiment for the woman he has won; who treats her as if she were a slave who should feel honored in serving him; who vents upon her helpless head the ill nature he would like to pour into the faces of his fellow men but dares not, were wise to heed the advice which Iago gave to the Moor.

Woman is more subtle than her ancient enemy, the serpent, and woe to the man who attempts to tread her beneath his feet! True it is that all women who find the hymeneal rites but an unreading of that enchanted spell in which they worshipped devils as demi-gods; between whose eager lips the golden Apples of Hesperides prove but Dead Sea fruit; for whom the promised Elysium looms but a parched Sahara, do not seek in forbidden fields to feed their famished hearts; but it is well for the peace of mind of many a husband who neither dotes nor doubts, that black dishonor oft goes hand-in-hand with blissful ignorance.

The philosophic world rejects the story of Joseph, having long ago learned that he-Dians live only in childish legend and Della-Cruscan poetry. As an ideal it reverses the natural relation of the sexes; as an example it is worse than worthless, for instead of inspiring emulation the young Hebrew's heroic continence only provokes contempt. Men worship at the shrine of Solomon's wisdom, of Moses' perseverance, of David's dauntless courage, but crown the altar of Joseph with asses' ears. Such foolish Munchausenisms give to young girls a false idea of the opposite sex, relax their vigilance and imperil their virtue. From such ridiculous romances, solemnly approved by an owl-like priesthood, sprung that false code—so insulting to womankind—that a wife's honor is not committed to her own keeping, but to the tender care of every man with whom she comes in contact. When a wife goes wrong a hypocritical world rises in well-simulated wrath—which is too often envy—and hurls its anathema maranatha at the head of the "designing villain," as tho' his companion in crime was born without brains and reared without instruction! The "injured husband"—who probably drove his wife to the devil by studied neglect that starved her heart and wounded her vanity—is regarded with contempt if he does not "make a killing" for a crime against the social code which he would himself commit.

I paint man as I find him, not as I would have him. I did not create him, nor did his Architect ask my advice; hence it is no fault of mine that his virtue's frail as ocean foam,—not mine the blame that while half a god he's all a beast. Mentally and sexually man is a polygamist, and, whatever its moral value may be, monogamy does violence to the law of his nature. It is a barrier against which he ever beats like some wild beast of prey against restraining bars. Give him Psyche to wife and Sappho for mistress and he were not content—would swim a river to make mad love to some freckled maid. It is likely that Leander had at home a wife he dearly loved when he lost his life trying to reach fair Hero's bower. That the Lord expects little even of the best of men when subjected to beauty's blandishments is proven by his partiality to various princes and patriarchs who, in matters of gallantry, may be regarded as pace-setters.

I am not the apologist of the godless rake, the defender of the *roue*; but I have small patience with those mawkish purists who persist in measuring men and women by the same standard of morals. We might as well apply the same code to the fierce Malay who runs amuck, and to McAllister's fashionable pismires. We might as wisely bring to the same

judgment bar Bengal's royal beast, crazed with lust for blood, and Jaques' wounded deer, weeping in the purling brook. Each sex and genus must be considered by itself, for each possesses its peculiar virtues and inherent vices. In all nature God intended the male to seek, the female to be sought. These he drives with passion's fiery scourge, those he gently leads by maternal longings, and thus is the Law of Life fulfilled,—the living tide runs ever on from age to age, while divine Modesty preserves her name and habitation on the earth. A man's crown of glory is his courage, a woman's her chastity. While these remain the incense rises ever from Earth's altar to Heaven's eternal throne; but it matters not how pure the man if he be a cringing coward; how brave the woman if she be a brazen bawd. Lucrece as Cæsar were infamous, and Cæsar as Lucrece were a howling farce.

ADAM AND EVE.

After God had expended five days creating this little dog-kennel of a world and one in manufacturing the remainder of the majestic universe out of a job-lot of political boom material, he "planted a garded eastward in Eden, and there he put the man he had formed." Adam was at that time a bachelor, therefore, his own boss. He was monarch of all he surveyed and his right there was as yet none to dispute. He could stay out and play poker all night in perfect confidence that when he fell over the picket fence at 5 g. m. he would find no vinegar-faced old female nursing a curtain lecture to keep it warm, setting her tear jugs in order and working up a choice assortment of snuffles. There were no lightning-rod agents to inveigle him into putting \$100 worth of pot-metal corkscrews on a \$15 barn. He didn't care a rap about "the law of rent," nor who paid the "tariff tax," and no political Buzfuz bankrupted his patience trying to explain the silver problem. He didn't have to anchor his smoke-house to the center of gravity with a log-chain, set a double-barreled bear-trap in the donjon keep of his hennery nor tie a brace of pessimistic bull-dogs loose in his melon patch, for the nigger preacher had not yet arrived with his adjustable morals and omnivorous mouth. No female committees of uncertain age invaded his place of business and buncoed him out of a

double saw-buck for the benefit of a pastor who would expend it seeing what Parkhurst saw and feeling what Parkhurst felt. Collectors for dry-goods emporiums and millinery parlors did not haunt him like an accusing conscience, and the pestiferous candidate was still happily hidden in the womb of time with the picnic pismire and the partisan newspaper. Adam could express an honest opinion without colliding with the platform of his party or being persecuted by the professional heresy hunters. He could shoot out the lights and yoop without getting into a controversy with the chicken-court and being fined one dollar for the benefit of the State and fleeced out of forty for the behoof of thieving officials. He had no collar-buttons to lose, no upper vest pockets to spill his pencils and his patience, and his breeches never bagged at the knees. There were no tailors to torment him with scraps of ancient history, no almond-eyed he-washer-women to starch the tail of his Sunday shirt as stiff as a checker-board.

Adam was more than 100 years old when he lost a rib and gained a wife. Genesis does not say so in exact words, but I can make nothing else out of the argument. Our first parents received special instructions to "be fruitful and multiply." They were given distinctly to understand that was what they were here for. They were brimming with health and strength, for disease and death had not yet come into the world. Their blood was pure and thrilled with the passion that is the music of physical perfection,—yet Adam was 130 years old when his third child was born. If Adam and Eve were of equal age a marriage in American "high life"—the mating of a scorbutic dude with a milliner's sign—could scarce make so poor a record. After the birth of Seth the first of men "begat sons and daughters"—seems to have become imbued with an ambition to found a family. As the first years of a marriage are usually the most fruitful we may fairly conclude that our common mother was an old man's darling. Woman does not appear to have been included in the original plan of creation. She was altogether unnecessary, for if God could create one man out of the dust of the earth without her assistance he could make a million more,—could keep on manufacturing them so long as his dust lasted. But multiplication of "masterpieces" was no part of the Creator's plan. Adam was to rule the earth even as Jehovah rules the heavens. As there is but one Lord of heaven, there should be but one lord of earth—one only Man, who should live forever, the good genius of a globe created, not for a race of marauders and murderers, but for that infinitely hap-

pier life which we denominate the lower animals. This beautiful world was not built for politicians and preachers, kings and cuckolds, but for the beasts and birds, the forests and the flowers, and over all of life, animate and inanimate, the earthly image of Almighty God was made the absolute but loving lord. The lion should serve him and the wild deer come at his call. The bald eagle, whose bold wing seems to fan the noonday sun to fiercer flame, should bend from the empyrean at his bidding, and the roc bear him over land and sea on its broad pinions. As his great Archetype rules the Cherubim and Seraphim, so should Man, a god in miniature, reign over the earth-born, the inhabitants of a lesser heaven. As no queen shares God's eternal throne, so none should divide the majesty of earth's diadem. There is neither marrying nor giving in marriage, we are told, among the angels. They rise above sex, into the realm of the purely spiritual, scorning the sensual joys that are the heritage of bird and beast, for intellectual pleasures that never pall; and why should Man, the especial object of God's providence, be grosser than his ministers?

Were I a poet I would ask no grander theme than Adam's first century upon the earth,—that age of gold when Man was sufficient unto himself. A century undisputed master of the world! A century of familiar converse in Eden's consecrated groves with the great First Cause—the omnipresent and omnipotent God. Picture one day of such an existence! Ambition and Avarice, Jealousy and Passion, those demons that have deluged the world with blood and tears, have no place in Adam's peaceful bosom. He is not in the Grove of Daphne where lust is law, but in the Garden of God where love is life. His subjects, not dumb as now, or speaking a language strange to our dull ears, greet him as he comes forth at break of day from his aromatic bower. A thousand feathered songsters drown his soul in melody divine, while every bud and blossom, a living censer, sways in the balmy breath of morn and pours forth its grateful perfume. The forest monarch lays his massy head on Adam's knee, the spotted leopard purrs about him and the fawn nestles between his feet. High above the Caucasian peaks a condor poises motionless in mid-heaven, the unrisen sun gilding him as with beaten gold. Now the saw-like summits, cloud kissing and crowned with eternal snow, burst into the brilliant sea and gleam like the brow of God, while the purple mists are drawn up from the deep valleys as tho' the giants fain would hide from earth their splendors, reserving them alone for heaven. Higher and higher wheels the great sun, driving the river mist be-

fore it and sending down through the softly whispering foliage a thousand shafts of burnished gold that seek out the violet, drain the nectareous dew-drop from its chalice and kiss the grape until its youthful sap changes to empurpled blood beneath the passionate caress. In the cool shadows by the great spring—a magic mirror in whose pellucid depths are reflected heaven's imperial concave and Eden's virgin splendors—God walks familiar with Adam as with a younger brother, explains to him the use and beauty of all that is and spreads before his wondering eyes Creation's mighty plan.

And yet God suspects that Adam is not content, for we hear him soliloquizing: "It is not good that the man should be alone." The clay of which the first of men is formed is beginning to assert itself. He watches the panther fondling his playful cubs, the eagle's solicitude for his imperial brood perched on the beetling crag, and the paternal instinct awakes within him. He hears the mocking-bird trilling to his mate, the dove pitying the loneliness of Creation's mystic lord, and a wild fierce longing for a companionship dearer than he has yet known takes possession of him. To the swarming life about him his high thoughts are incomprehensible; in God's presence his soul swoons beneath an intellectual glory to which he cannot rise, encumbered as he is by earthly clay. He sends his swift-winged messengers forth to summon before his throne every fowl of the air and every beast of the field. Down thro' the gates of the garden they come, countless thousands, and pass before their king. "But for Adam, there was not found a helpmeet for him." Sick at heart he turns away. The sunset has lost its glory, the spheres their music, life its sweetness. The beams of the moon chill his blood and Arcturus leads forth his shining sons but to mock his barrenness. The flowers that wreath his couch stifle him with their sensuous perfume and he flies from the nightingale's passionate song as the slave flees the scourge. Thro' the dark paths and over the moss-grown boulders he stumbles on, across the fields where the fire-flies glow like showers of flame, beneath the tall cedars whose every sigh seems drawn from the depths of an accepted lover's soul. Exhausted, he sinks down where the waters burst from the foundations of the earth and, dividing into four, seem to reiterate in ceaseless monotone, "Behold my mighty sons." A feeling of utter loneliness, of hopeless desolation falls upon him, such as hammers at the heart when Death has despoiled us of all that Life held dear. He pillows his head upon the sleeping lion and shields himself from the sharp night air

with the tawny mane. A cub, already hunting in dreams, comes whining and nestles down over his heart, while Love's brilliant star pours its splendors full upon his face. The long black lashes, burthened with unshed tears, droop low, a drowsiness falls upon him and Adam sleeps. The heavens are rolled together like a scroll and God descends in the midst of a legion of Angels, brightest of whom is Lucifer, Son of the Morning, not yet forever fallen. "It is not good that the man should be alone." The fitful slumber deepens; the winds are hushed; the song of the nightingale sinks lower and lower, then ceases with an awe-struck sigh; the lynx and the jackal, the horned owl and the scaly serpent slink away into the deepest wood, while Love's emblem glows like a globe of molten gold. Then comes a burst of melody divine, beneath which the earth trembles like a young maid's heart when, half in ecstasy, half in fear, she first feels burning upon her own the bearded lips of her life's dear lord. It is the Morning Stars singing together! There is a perfumed air on Adam's cheek, sweeter than ever swooned in the rose gardens of Cashmere or the jasmine bowers of Araby the Blest; there is a touch upon his forehead softer than the white dove's fluttering bosom; there is a voice in his ear more musical than Israfeel's marshaling the Faithful in fields of asphodel, crying "Awake my lord," and the first of men is looking with enraptured soul upon the last, best work of an all-wise God, a beautiful woman.

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